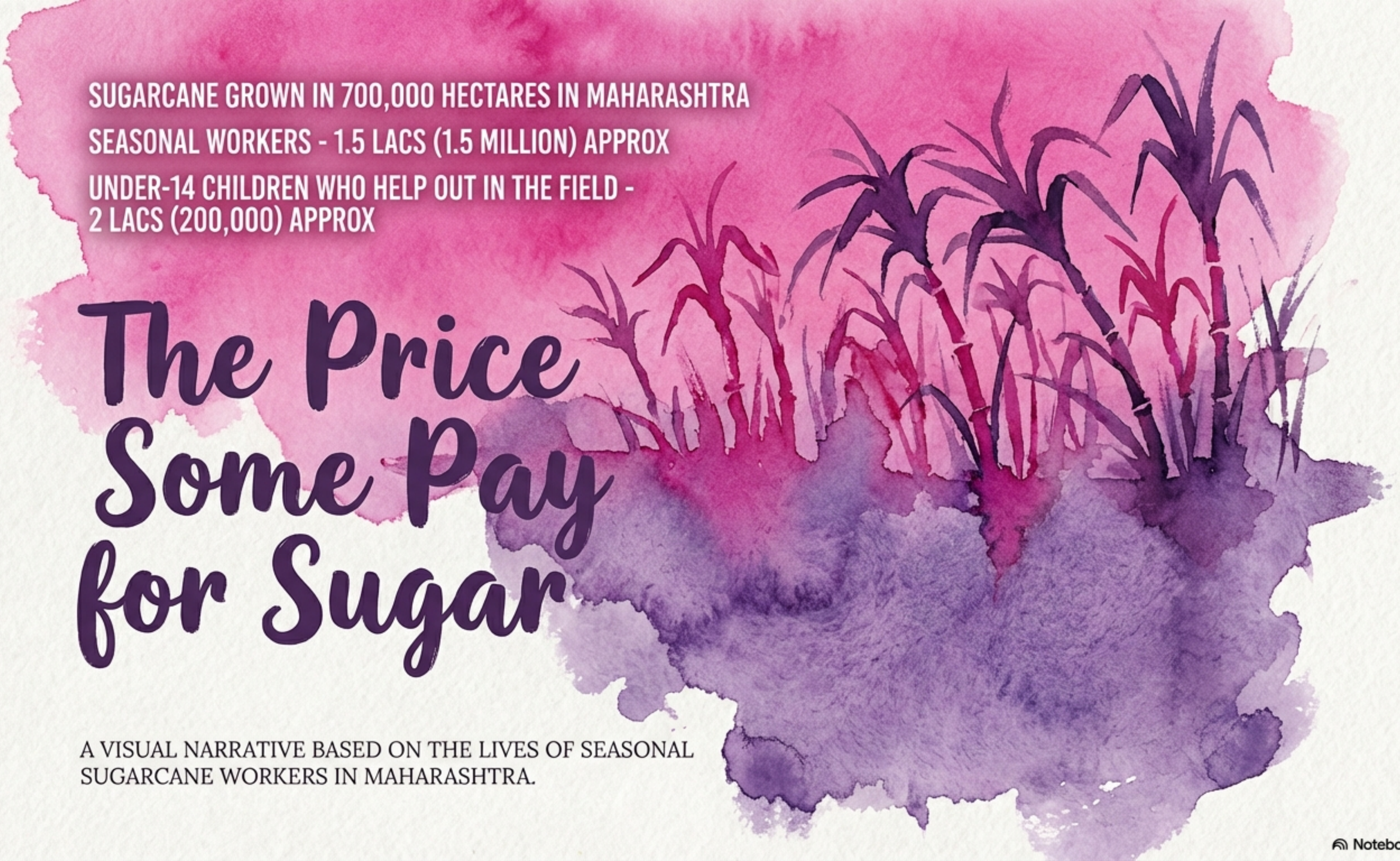
SUGARCANE GROWN IN 700,000 HECTARES IN MAHARASHTRA

SEASONAL WORKERS - 1.5 LACS (1.5 MILLION) APPROX

UNDER-14 CHILDREN WHO HELP OUT IN THE FIELD - 2 LACS (200,000) APPROX



The Price Some Pay for Sugar

A VISUAL NARRATIVE BASED ON THE LIVES OF SEASONAL SUGARCANE WORKERS IN MAHARASHTRA.

NotebookLM

The Long Road from Bodhka Village

After travelling for 11 hours in an open truck from their remote village in Beed, the Kedar family begins their first day of work in a Marathwada sugarcane field. They are landless farmers seeking survival. They are not alone—they are among the 1.6 million farmers who migrate annually to cultivate sugarcane on the region's vast 700,000 hectares of land.

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Seven Hours Down, Seven to Go

Ram Kedar is on his 7th hour of cutting sugarcane. He has another seven hours to go today in the blistering heat.

This is the reality of the harvest: back-breaking, labour-intensive work performed in 14-hour shifts.

DAY 1

MARATHWADA

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The Classroom is Left Behind

Ram's 6-year-old daughter, Aditi, must work too. While her parents work 11-hour shifts, she manages the household, feeds the baby, and keeps the fire burning.

In Aditi's home village, classmates drop out one by one as migration season begins. She is now one of the staggering 200,000 children living in these fields—a generation whose education is paused for survival.

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DAY 23

The Women Wake at 4 A.M.

While Ram's day starts at 5 A.M., his wife Seema's begins at 4 A.M.

With no proper toilets in the fields, women must wake up earlier so they can bathe in the open before the sun rises.

Then begins the fetching of water from public taps before they get too crowded, followed by the cooking for the entire family—all before the harvest work begins.

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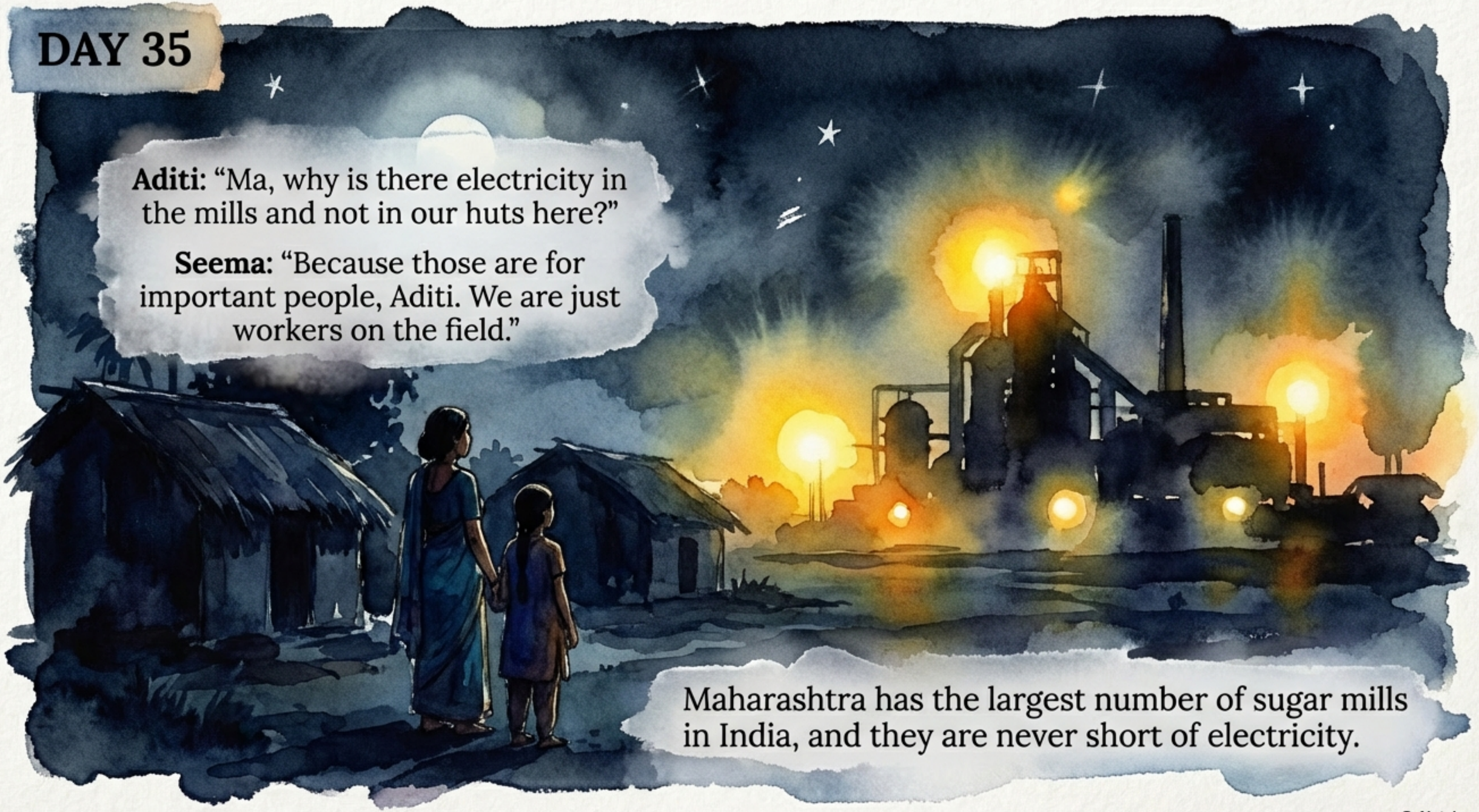
DAY 35
Aditi: “Ma, why is there electricity in the mills and not in our huts here?”
Seema: “Because those are for important people, Aditi. We are just workers on the field.”
Maharashtra has the largest number of sugar mills in India, and they are never short of electricity.

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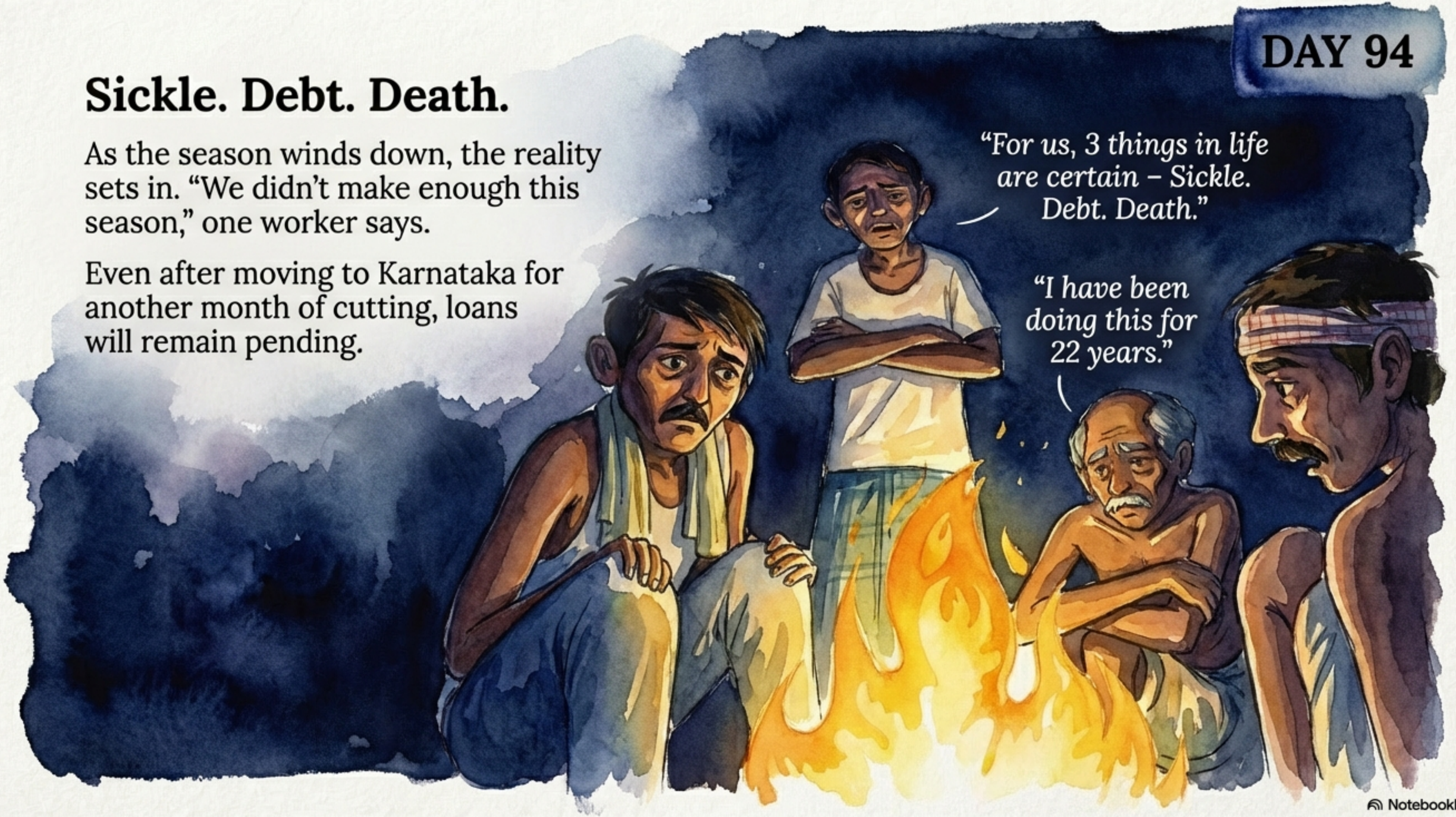
DAY 94

Sickle. Debt. Death.

As the season winds down, the reality sets in. “We didn’t make enough this season,” one worker says.

Even after moving to Karnataka for another month of cutting, loans will remain pending.



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DAY 125

The Math Doesn't Add Up

At the end of a tiring 5-month cutting season, Ram's family will have barely earned Rs 60,000 (approx $720 USD). This sum must suffice for the next 6 months. It must cover paying old loans, making ends meet, and supporting old relatives.

The family returns to their village... only to wait to migrate again next season.

NotebookLM

This story is a reality for millions of families in India.

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Source Material: ‘The Price Some Pay for Sugar’

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